Two of the most prevalent symptoms that working adults face each day are the effects of stress and inflammation on the body. Stress is something that we all accept as a natural occurrence we must face each day that originates from just about every walk of life. Stress can be crippling though, as it can cause a cascade of physical and mental problems to occur that can completely derail a person from living normally. Even worse, constant chronic stress can make the body sick, weak, and in continuous pain. Similarly, pain and inflammation are common and can be caused by many things such as sitting at work all day, being on your feet all day, lack of physical activity, too much activity, or even past/current injuries. Given both stress and pain being commonplace in most adult’s lives, medical companies have found ways to numb these sensations through pills and our community has found ways through drugs and alcohol. That’s why when we find natural medication that has scientific merit and is backed by literature, it’s important to bring them to light. These two herbal remedies mentioned is this article are far from your witch doctor hocus-pocus and can significantly improve symptoms of stress and inflammation naturally.

**Ashwagandha**

Chronic stress has been associated with a number of illnesses, including; obesity, cardiovascular disease, hormonal imbalances, colds, depression, and the list goes on. One way this happens is because stress elevates the body’s cortisol levels. Cortisol is often called the stress hormone or is also known as the aging hormone. When cortisol gets too high, it puts you into a “fight or flight” response, which stimulates your sympathetic nervous system and your adrenal glands. When this occurs, there is a decrease in your digestive secretions and an increase in blood pressure. This puts your body in a state of constant stress, which will burn out your adrenal glands, stress your digestive tract and cause you to age more rapidly. Adaptogens are phyto-compounds that reduce the physical and chemical effects of stress.

 Ashwagandha is a natural herbal supplement and adaptogen that has been shown to prevent anxiety and improve our body’s ability to deal with stress. In the study below by Chandrasekhar et al., 64 subjects with chronic stress participated in this study that examined how Ashwagandha may improve their stress levels from a subjective state but also from a hormonal, physiological state. As noted above in the graphic, subject serum cortisol levels (stress hormone) had been reduced by 27.9% and all subjective mood/stress scores significantly improved! Depression, anxiety, and stress score all improved by 71.6%, general health questionnaire score by 72.3 points, and perceived stress scores improved by 44%!

Besides reducing stress, anxiety, and improving depression symptoms, Ashwagandha has also been shown to increase testosterone in males and increase power output in males and females! In one study, that tested the effects of Ashwagandha on spermatogenic activity, there was a 167% increase in sperm, 53% increase in semen volume, and 57% increase in sperm motility on day 90 from baseline.

Ashwagandha is a powerful, effective, and safe herbal supplement to utilize. I recommend taking 500mg every morning with breakfast, but can take up to 1000mg. Some studies have utilized 6000mg/day (2000mg/3x/day) with no negative side effects.

It’s important to note that I specifically recommend Ashwagandha products that utilize the KSM-66 strand, as this has been studied in the literature. The KSM-66 extract is drawn directly from the roots and does not include leaves or any other parts of the plant.

**Turmeric Curcumin**

Turmeric curcumin is a natural herbal spice that has been used in traditional Indian, Arabian, and Chinese medicine for a multitude of different treatments. Its most potent effects pertain to its anti-inflammatory properties.

Curcumin has an inhibitory effect on multiple substances involved with the inflammatory pathway in the body. By inhibiting expression of lipoxygenase (LOX) and cyclooxygenase this prevents the cascade of inflammatory actions to continue.

Multiple studies in the literature have compared the efficacy of turmeric vs non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs- ibuprofen) with many of these studies reporting similar anti-inflammatory effects between groups. However, there are reports that NSAIDs have yielded more negative side effects and complaints of gastric distress.

In the study above by Kuptniratsaikul et al. subjects in both groups responded very similar when utilizing 1200mg ibuprofen vs. 1500mg turmeric in regards to pain reduction and joint function over the course of 4 weeks. However the group utilizing NSAIDs reported abdominal pain 8% more than the turmeric group.

A recommended dosage for curcumin is 1,000-3,000mg per day. Turmeric can be found at vitamin stores, can be used to season your food, and even made in tea packets.

**Application**

It’s easy to just pop a pill in today’s society for pain or discomfort. The downside to this is many people overdose or overuse pills which can have negative lasting effects on the kidneys, liver and stomach. Of course taking a NSAID occasionally is not going to be harmful, but as most things in life, moderation is important. The issue with pain pills is that we quickly develop a dependency-relationship with them and makes it hard to feel normal without them; often times simply numbing the issue instead of fixing the problem. Bringing awareness to herbal remedies that actually yield scientific backing and are not simply a placebo-effect, can be a great alternative to commercialized medicine. If the body can respond positively to the effects of these two herbal medications, and utilizing them in place of synthetic forms of medication will yield less negative side effects, then in my mind, why not?!

Vijay R. Ambiye, Deepak Langade, Swati Dongre, Pradnya Aptikar, Madhura Kulkarni, and Atul Dongre, “Clinical Evaluation of the Spermatogenic Activity of the Root Extract of Ashwagandha (Withania somnifera) in Oligospermic Males: A Pilot Study,” Evidence-Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine, vol. 2013, Article ID 571420, 6 pages, 2013. doi:10.1155/2013/571420

Kuptniratsaikul, Vilai et al. “Efficacy and Safety of *Curcuma Domestica* Extracts Compared with Ibuprofen in Patients with Knee Osteoarthritis: A Multicenter Study.” *Clinical Interventions in Aging* 9 (2014): 451–458. *PMC*. Web. 8 May 2017.